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MISSIONS

AND

MISSIONARY BISHOPRICS

IN THE

AMERICAN CHURCH

A PAPER

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BY

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MISSIONS AND MISSIONARY BISHOPRICS.

The Church in America is the offspring of the missionary zeal of the Church of England. Coeval with the earliest attempts to colonise the western world were earnest efforts both to bring to the savage inhabitants of the soil a knowledge of Christ and His salvation, and to secure to those who were leaving their homes to found a new empire for England in the West, the priestly ministrations and religious privileges which were theirs in their native land. No one can read the touching chronicles of these voyages of discovery and efforts for settlement in Virginia, and elsewhere along the Atlantic coast, from the close of the sixteenth century, when the period of colonisation actually began, down to the middle of the last century, which witnessed the noble spectacle of a Church and nation uniting in zealous efforts to found the colony of Georgia, as a refuge for the virtuous poor of England and the persecuted Lutherans of Germany, without an admiration of the long continuance in well-doing on the part of the members of the Church of England, so far as mission work was concerned. Most gratefully does the Church in America record in the preface to her "Book of Common Prayer" that she "is indebted, under God, for her first foundation and a long continuance of nursing care and protection" to the mother Church; and the fact that, prior to the beginning of this century, there laboured on American soil, for a longer or shorter term of years, and many of them till death, nearly two thousand priests of English orders, is ample proof that in those years preceding that great revival of missionary zeal which we are so apt to date from the beginning of the present century, the English Church, whether in her prosperous or adverse days, was faithful to her Master's bidding,—"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." The century of active labour rendered by the Venerable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, formed part of this great work for Christ and His Church in the West, and there are no missionary letters more edifying, no missionary labors more apostolic and primitive, than those whose only written record may be found in the old folios dating back for a century and three-quarters at the Venerable Society's House, in London, now in process of reverent and loving publication by the authority of the American Church, and seen in even brighter characters in parishes, colleges, dioceses even, all over the American continent, now active centres of Church life and zeal, which these faithful men gave their lives and labours to found.

But one thing was lacking in this noble work. Priests and deacons were given us, faithful labourers abounded, Bibles, prayer-books, homilies, tracts, were freely bestowed; admirable works, specially adapted to the needs of the Church in America, were prepared and published—all furnished with a lavish, loving hand, but no bishop, in response to a cry for the episcopate that never ceased for over a century, was supplied. I know full well that the fault of all this lay not at the Church's door. The Bishops of London, the diocesans of the whole American possessions, confessed again and again their inability to administer a jurisdiction three thousand miles and more away. They prayed the Crown again and again for relief. The Venerable Society, as both its printed and its MS. records attest, re-

newed with tireless importunity the plea for the consecration of bishops for America. But political complications prevented the successful issue of these efforts, the propriety of which none but factious dissenters or lukewarm Churchmen could deny. And it was not till, with the separation of the Colonies from the motherland, their ecclesiastical independence was necessarily assured, that Seabury in Scotland, in 1784, and White and Provoost at Lambeth, in 1787, received the apostolical commission, and the American Church had its College of bishops with which to begin its life and work for Christ fully two centuries after the mission work of the English Church had been entered upon within the limits of the United States.

Nearly a century has passed since the first American bishop—himself a missionary of the Venerable Society from his earliest ministry—began the labour of founding in its completeness the Church in the West; and the record of the long and painful journeyings of the apostolic Seabury, whose episcopate was gradually extended beyond the limits of Connecticut, his original see, till it embraced practically the whole of New England, is a most interesting chapter of the history of the mission work of the American Church. Nor was he alone either in labours or success. The amiable and devoted White, whose life was spared till the little one had become a strong people, was not a whit behind in zealous and acceptable labour for the spread of the Church. From the first it was a settled principle that the Church in each State, when it was practicable, should have at its head, its bishop. Seabury of Connecticut, White of Pennsylvania, Provoost of New York, and subsequently Madison of Virginia, received consecration abroad; the first, as we have said, in Scotland, the others in England. The four united in the consecration of Claggett for Maryland, and ere the close of the century which had so late witnessed the introduction of the episcopate into America, the Church was quietly settled under its chosen bishops, from Massachusetts and New Hampshire at the north, to South Carolina at the south.

Prior even to this, and at the meeting of the very first General Convention, subsequent to the union of the Churches throughout the land in one organization, —in the year 1792, we have the first missionary action of the American Church. It was "An Act of the General Convention for Supporting Missionaries to preach the Gospel on the frontiers of the United States." This scheme, which it is not necessary to give in full, recommends the preaching of an annual missionary sermon by every parochial clergyman throughout the land, and the collection of an offertory for mission work. An address to the Church from the presiding bishop, advocating the cause of missions, was also ordered to be read to the people by their respective clergymen, while the disposal of the moneys thus collected, and the appointment of the missonaries, was committed by the Church to the presiding Bishop White, and the "Standing Committee" of the Convention, which at that time represented the General Convention of the Church during the recess of that body. In this churchly mode was the earliest missionary scheme of the American Church conceived. I need not pause to detail the hindrances to the successful accomplishment of this plan, growing out of the peculiar circumstances of an impoverished country, a scattered population, and a wide-spread indifference to religious claims prevailing at the time. The next Convention, feeling, possibly, that the scheme they had entered upon was premature, relegated the conduct and control of the missionary work to the diocesan Conventions which, with their bishops, entered zealously upon the work. Particularly was this the case in the diocese of New York, where there still remained some of the endowments for religious uses given previous to the War of Independence. Here under the faithful administration of Bishop Benjamin

Moore, and afterwards under the oversight of the devoted Hobart, whose praise was in all the Churches, the Church was firmly planted throughout the large and important State of New York, the western portions of which were then for the first time occupied by settlers. More slowly, but with no less zeal, was the work carried on under the oversight of Bishop White, in Pennsylvania, while in New England, all of which, save Connecticut, was, so far as the Church was concerned, missionary ground, the truly apostolic zeal and prudence of Griswold, who, at a later date, succeeded White as presiding bishop, gave an impetus to the Church's growth which resulted in the rapid subdivision of his see into five separate bishoprics. At the south there was a slower movement, and it required all the energies of Bishop Channing Moore to effect, as, under God, he finally did, the revival of the oldest portion of the American Church. While at the west, where States were being born in a day, Ohio, conscious of the apostolic mode of Church aggression, claimed at the hands of the General Convention the consecration of the well-known Philander Chase as its bishop, elected by the few clergy his own missionary zeal and example had drawn to this distant and uninviting field. Thus in every direction, each one, as in the days of the rebuilding of Jerusalem, erecting the wall over against his own house, without other machinery than the bishop and his official advisers to direct, and with, save in few instances only, the offerings of the faithful as the means for carrying on the work, was the Church extended throughout the length and breadth of the land.

All this preceded the organization of any general missionary society in the American Church. The first attempt to inaugurate such a society was in 1820, and at the special meeting of the General Convention of 1821, the "Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society" of the Church was formally organised, it being from the first, the creation, and under the control of the General Convention, which is itself the Church, meeting by its chosen representatives, in its legislative, executive, and judicial capacity. Up to this time, the missonary operations of the American Church had been confined to the revival of decayed or distinct parishes, the continuance of the work among the Indians begun, and for years carried on by the Venerable Society, and the spiritual care of the settlers on the frontiers. Now, missions were established in rapid succession in Africa, in Greece, in China, in the republic of Texas, and among the Indians at the west. Nor did the work at home languish. The new States at the west and south-west rapidly became sees, and with their bishops at the head made rapid advances in number and influence.

At the General Convention of 1835, the constitution of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society was changed, and the work of missions, in place of being delegated to a society under the control of the Church, was made the work of the Church itself. Every baptized member of the Church was declared to be a member of its missionary organisation. The executive body chosen triennially hy the General Convention was styled the Board of Missions. Of this governing hody the bishops were *ex-officio* members, together with certain clergymen and laymen chosen by the General Convention, each diocese being proportionally represented. Canonical provision was now made for the consecration of missionary bishops. Heretofore, the few clergy in a new State or territory, organised a convention and elected a bishop, subject to the ratification of the General Convention; now, in addition to this provision, it was determined to provide episcopal supervision for those portions of the country where as yet there were no missionary lahourers. It was thought that the bishop should be the pioneer, as well as the chief missionary. He was to go forth as the apostles went forth, and find his helpers among the converts he made or from the companions of his travels. A bishop for the north-west, the truly apostolic Jackson

Kemper, was elected and consecrated; and the years of faithful and successful labour that followed, attested the wisdom of this plan of missionary operations. Bishop Kemper lived to see the territory committed to his charge, divided and subdivided into strong and zealous dioceses. The few clergy who came to his aid, in response to the appeals he made for help when he had once surveyed the needs of his charge, were multiplied by hundreds ere he died; and throughout the American Church no name is held in deeper reverence to-day, than that of the hard-working, faithful Kemper, our first missionary bishop. Following this auspicious choice, efforts were made to supply the south-west and the foreign mission-fields each with a missionary bishop. After several failures these efforts resulted in the selection of the Right Rev. Dr. Freeman for the former, and the Right Rev. Drs. Payne and Boone for Africa and China. Thus was the mission work of the American Church fully organised. In 1853, the growing communities of California and Oregon were supplied with missionary bishops, and in 1859, the episcopate of the American Church was made co-extensive with the bounds of the United States, by the erection of those portions of the country which had hitherto been without episcopal supervision, into missionary sees. At the accomplishment of this act by the General Convention, giving evidence as it did that God had been with His Church till she had filled the land from shore to shore, the vast assembly of bishops, deputies, and spectators sought expression of their thankfulness in the spontaneous burst of song in the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*. It was at this Convention that the venerable Kemper, now full of years and labours, resigned his missionary episcopate, retaining the see of Wisconsin, and received, as was his due, the expression of the Church's grateful recognition of his life-long devotion and service.

That step, which filled the hearts of Churchmen in America with devout gratitude to God, in the extension of the episcopate all over the limits of the land, has proved in the rapid increase of clergy and dioceses the true policy of the American Church. With us the missionary bishop is found to be the best, and, in fact, the most *profitable* missionary. So thoroughly is this conviction impressed upon the minds of the Executive Committees of our Board of Missions, that although the jurisdiction of the north-west has been subdivided a score of times since the see was first established, the Home Committee, with the full concurrence of the Board of Missions itself, urged upon the General Convention of 1874 the immediate duty of appointing a missionary bishop for every State and territory not already separately provided with one, thus subdividing the sees which were themselves but fragments of the vast jurisdiction, that, but fifteen years before, had been committed to the supervision of a single bishop. The Convention, though not granting this request in full, created four additional missionary sees at home, and two in the foreign field; while at the Convention of 1877 there is little doubt but that the desired increase of chief pastors in the various departments of the mission field will be fully met.

The question may be asked, in what respects is this policy found of advantage? The answer is briefly this, we believe it to be the apostolic mode of conducting the aggressive work of the Church. It is historically the more successful mode of Church evangelisation. It is, besides, of no little advantage in a popular point of view, to have in the newly settled portions of our vast territory towards which the the stream of immigration is turning, a man chosen for his piety, his zeal, and his abilities, who becomes at once a centre, not alone of churchly life and effort, but of all the religious feeling of the new community. The missionary bishop with us does not wait for an endowment, nor even for a staff of clergy to accompany him to his appointed field. His moderate stipend—it is $3,000, with a certain allow-

ance for actual travelling expenses—is provided by the Church through the Board of Missions, and it is an interesting fact, in connection with this whole question of the importance of missionary bishoprics, that the stipends of all the American missionary bishops are nearly, if not wholly, provided from the offerings through mite-chests of the children of the Church The bishop, thus entering upon his work often single-handed, becomes at once and of necessity the pioneer missionary of his jurisdiction. He visits a new settlement. The fact that he is a bishop will secure him hearers in the rude court-room, or it may be the coffee-room of the inn, when a service is announced. That he is a bishop will encourage those who desire to secure the privileges of the Church in the community, to confer with him as to their needs and wishes. He judges of those needs, secures the pledges of the people for the support of a Missionary priest and the erection of a church. He gives assurances of aid from abroad contingent upon these promises. He remains a few days or weeks, and nurses the feeble beginnings of a parish, into actual life, and then, in giving over the place to the missionary priest he has called, and to whom he has personally pledged support, he passes on his way to repeat under other though but little varied circumstances, and in other localities of the vast territory committed to his charge, the same general plan of operations. Where the priest alone, unknown and lacking the moral support of the whole Church which the bishop has, would inevitably fail, the bishop is successful, and the rapid growth of the Church in the Western States, and the encouraging fact that even before Methodism, even before Romanism, the American Church has found its way into several of these remote fields of Western labour, attests the wisdom of the system in its practical working, by which the bishop of the see becomes its organiser, and moulds it from its very inception in the Church's way.

Besides, there is another side to the question: the bishop has been taken, it may be, from the more populous and more wealthy East; he leaves a wide sphere of influence, indeed, for one, at the first sight, narrow and of comparative less importance, but, in this self-denying exchange, he is able to make these early connections, of service in his work. From his former friends and parishioners he is able to command a constant supply of means. From his old associates and helpers of various grades, he can command men. The East is ever thus giving to the West, and the Church is being built up and cemented at the same time, by this reciprocal interchange of service and grateful love. It is thus that the missionary bishops of the American Church have in their respective fields of labour done service not for the present only, but for all time. Among the Mormon settlements in Utah, Bishop Tuttle has founded his Church-schools, filled now to overflowing, built his beautiful cathedral, and planted in every direction the seeds of a harvest near at hand. In the far north-west, in Oregon and Washington, Bishop Morris has built noble educational institutions for the young men and young women of his jurisdiction, and within his brief episcopate has seen his church double its number of parishes, and add to its strength tenfold. In Colorado the Church college and its schools have preocupied every prominent position in the territory, and give ample assurance of the addition of the missionary jurisdiction to the number of our organised dioceses at the coming General Convention. In Nebraska, cathedral, college, schools, and numerous churches prove the successful working of this plan. And thus I might proceed to give instances, well known in our own land, of similar successes in the Indian work under the zealous and devoted Bishop Hare, and in short in every department of this ever-widening mission field—while abroad, I am confident, that even in England there is memory of the labours of that faithful American missionary bishop of Japan, who in a score of years of mis-

sion work had never revisited his native land, save at the call of the Church to receive his episcopal commission—and who was found not long ago by an English traveller, in his solitary apartment, with but a single blanket on his bed and another for his covering—seated on the floor by a pan of coals translating the Word of God into Japanese for the use of his converts. And I might add a reference to the recently consecrated bishop of the "Independent Church of Hayti"—the Right Rev Dr. Holly, a bishop of the African race, whose piety, learning, and eloquence has been universally recognised in America, and whose future success in his interesting field is not dimly shadowed-forth already.

To such single-hearted labourers and to such untiring devotion,—there is but a single retired American bishop among all our sixty chief pastors,—God has given, God will yet give—abundant blessings. To him alone the praise.

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